



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development
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BUSINESSES -- A PRIORITY TO SOUTH CENTRAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT AND USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Grand Island, Neb., September 19, 2005—USDA Rural Development presented a \$50,000 symbolic check to South Central Economic Development District (SCEDD) in Grand Island tonight. Funds will hire a facilitator to conduct technical assistance in 12 counties of south central Nebraska. Project expected to create and/or save approximately 170 jobs. SCEDD will contribute \$9,482 with \$34,290 of in-kind funds joining for total project cost of nearly \$94,000.

Public meetings held, revealed a need for technical assistance to businesses in the district. SCEDD counties include Adams, Buffalo, Clay, Franklin, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Kearney, Merrick, Nuckolls, Phelps, and Webster.

“South Central Economic Development District is pleased to accept this grant. It will allow us to continue the development of our philosophy of “one community (SCEDD) with many population centers (communities within SCEDD)”. A win for one of our district’s rural communities is a win for every community in SCEDD,” stated Tim Loewenstein, chairman of SCEDD.

SCEDD’s goal is to educate and encourage business owners and entrepreneurs in the district through a dynamic local support system; building a capacity for economic development, expansion, retention and business transfer. SCEDD is leveraging economic development assets to create a regional entity that will identify and address the crucial needs of business owners, entrepreneurs and prospective business owners, to be managed by the facilitator who will have an office in each of the district’s counties.

“SCEDD is dedicated to the growth of the district through expansion and retention of established businesses and by attracting new business to the area,” continued Loewenstein. “Business transfer is a crucial element in maintaining a healthy rural economy. A lifetime of business wisdom cannot be replaced, but it can be transferred.”

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Technical assistance tasks to be completed by the facilitator include compiling and completing a listing of area businesses and entrepreneurs, and conducting a needs assessment. Customized, direct assistance to area businesses according to the needs assessment results, will then be delivered. Facilitator will also develop a centralized referral assistance program with listing of local resources and of area business service providers.

“Businesses are critical to the growth and sustainability of our rural communities,” stated Karissa Hagedorn, business programs specialist for USDA Rural Development. “Rural communities need jobs in order to retain their residents and to attract newcomers. USDA Rural Development is happy to assist SCEDD in their efforts to strengthen their district’s business capacity.”

USDA funds provided through USDA Rural Development’s Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program.

For additional information contact Karissa Hagedorn at (308) 237-3118, (402) 437-5093 (TDY); 4009 North 6th Avenue Kearney, Neb. 68848; or Tim Loewenstein, SCEDD (308) 237-0000. Visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne/>.

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